



STATE OF GEORGIA

***OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR***

**Sonny Perdue**  
**GOVERNOR**

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**Donated Conservation Easements Protect 21,000 Acres Along  
Critical State Waterways**

ATLANTA – Today Governor Sonny Perdue announced 13 conservation easement donations from private landowners to the state of Georgia as part of the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP). The protected properties, totaling more than 21,000 acres, fall along key waterways that serve as drinking water sources and habitat for high-priority wildlife. In each case, the conservation value of the property will be permanently protected and monitored by the state while the land remains in private ownership and stewardship.

“On behalf of the state of Georgia I want to extend my gratitude to these generous landowners for helping to conserve Georgia’s land resources for generations to come,” said Governor Perdue.

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements that permanently restrict how land can be used. Landowners maintain ownership of their properties, but they forfeit some development and other rights. The state of Georgia encourages conservation easements by offering income tax credits to donors of qualifying easements to state agencies, local governments and private non-profit land trusts. Federal tax incentives and other financial benefits are also available.

The GLCP is managed by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA). The program works with public and private sector partners to permanently protect lands with high conservation value. Governor Perdue introduced the Georgia Land Conservation Act, which created the GLCP, during the 2005 session of the General Assembly to encourage the long-term

conservation and protection of the state's natural, cultural and historic resources. The Georgia Land Conservation Act passed with broad bipartisan support and Governor Perdue signed it into law on April 14, 2005. Since the program's inception, the GLCP has played a role in 203 land conservation transactions that have permanently protected a total of 141,972 acres. For more information on the GLCP, please visit [www.glcp.ga.gov](http://www.glcp.ga.gov).

Seven conservation easements were approved by the State Properties Commission today with the remaining easements approved earlier this year. Brief summaries of the donated conservation easements are provided below.

#### Alapaha River

Mr. Murray Gaskins of Alapaha, Georgia, donated a conservation easement covering 4,883 acres in Berrien County to the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). The property extends for eight miles along both sides of the Alapaha River. The property supports significant stands of longleaf pine and cypress wetlands, and contains cemetery plots that date from the early 1800's. The easement terms permanently protect these sensitive natural features while allowing active forestry practices to continue.

#### Ocmulgee River

Mr. Rick Towns of Alamo, Georgia, donated a conservation easement covering 4,056 acres in Telfair County to the GFC. The tract fronts 3.4 miles of the Ocmulgee River. The easement terms permanently protect the tract's river frontage, as well as its numerous bottomlands, streams and ponds, while allowing active forestry practices to continue.

#### Oconee River

Mr. Rick Towns of Alamo, Georgia, donated a conservation easement covering 4,291 acres in Wheeler County to the GFC. The tract fronts nine miles of the Oconee River. Sensitive habitat for species of concern, including gopher tortoises and the rare plants Ohoopee Bumelia and Oconee Skullcap, will be protected by the easement terms, which also allow for active forestry operations to continue.

#### Whitewater Creek

A private landowner from Butler, Georgia, donated a conservation easement covering 102 acres in Taylor County to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The parcel fronts 1.5 miles on Whitewater Creek and falls within the Fall Line Sandhills Region of Georgia. The tract supports rare and sensitive ecosystems, including Atlantic White Cedar stands and Xeric Longleaf Pine/Scrub Oak forest, which will be permanently protected by the easement terms.

### Ichawaynochaway Creek

Lindsay Boring and Kay Kirkman of Albany, Georgia, donated a conservation easement covering 80 acres on Ichawaynochaway Creek in Baker County to the DNR. Easement terms ensure that the tract's bottomland hardwoods and cypress swamps will be permanently managed for protection of the creek, while the tract's upland areas will be managed for wiregrass and longleaf pine restoration.

### Conasauga River

Mr. James Dellinger of Cartersville, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on 1,205 acres in Murray County to the DNR. The property is surrounded on three sides by lands of the Chattahoochee National Forest, contains a two-mile stretch of the Conasauga River in the Alaculsy Valley and supports at least fifteen high-priority wildlife species. The terms of the easement restrict future uses of the tract to hunting and nature-based recreation while allowing for stream mitigation credits to be earned on areas adjoining the Conasauga River.

### Ochlockonee River

The Balfour Land Company of Thomasville, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on 1,695 acres of the Myrtlewood Plantation in Thomas County to the DNR. A four-mile stretch of the Ochlockonee River forms the property's northern boundary, which adjoins the River Creek Wildlife Management Area to form a continuous conservation area spanning 4,300 acres. The easement allows silviculture to continue on upland areas while permanently protecting the bottomland hardwood forests along the Ochlockonee River.

### Flint River – Pike County

Mr. J. Roger Lumsden of Gay, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on 351 acres in Pike County to the GFC. The property contains 0.50 miles of frontage on the Flint River downstream from the Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area as well as bottomland hardwood forests and tributary streams. The conservation easement will prohibit subdivision and development, allowing only timber harvesting and minimal construction, and provide additional protections for the tract's water resources and rock outcrops.

### Flint River – Meriwether County

Mr. J. Roger Lumsden of Gay, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on 453 acres in Meriwether County to the GFC. The property contains 0.75 miles of frontage on the Flint River as well as bottomland hardwood forests and tributary streams. The conservation easement will prohibit subdivision and development, allowing only timber harvesting and minimal construction, and provide additional protections for the tract's water resources.

### Spring Creek

Sugar Hill Land Conservation LLC of Perry, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on the 834-acre Sugar Hill tract in Houston County to the GFC. The property contains multiple creeks that feed into stretches of the Ocmulgee River that are designated high-priority waterways by DNR. The on-site creeks, including Spring Creek and Big Creek, will be protected by the easement terms, which limit future development to only two home sites and permit timber harvesting that is consistent with forestry best management practices.

### Bay Creek

Sports Management LLC of Perry, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on a 1,513-acre tract in Peach County. The property contains a part of Bay Creek, which feeds into a stretch of the Ocmulgee River that is designated a high-priority waterway by DNR. Bay Creek will be protected by the easement, which requires the use of forestry best management practices along the creek. The easement also limits future development to four home sites while permitting timber harvesting and some agricultural operations.

### Limestone Creek

Dr. John Bembry of Hawkinsville, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on a 145-acre tract in Pulaski County to the GFC. The property contains a part of Limestone Creek, which feeds into a stretch of the Ocmulgee River that is designated as a high-priority waterway by DNR. Limestone Creek, its associated bottomlands and on-site millpond support an array of wildlife that will be protected by the conservation easement. The easement also limits future development, while allowing some timber harvesting and aquaculture.

### Pendleton Creek

Mr. Jim L. Gillis, III of Soperton, Georgia, donated a conservation easement on 1,453 acres on Pendleton Creek in Treutlen and Laurens Counties to the GFC. The property contains ecologically-important areas, including ponds, waterways and longleaf pine stands, which will be permanently protected by the conservation easement. The easement also ensures that the Gillis family, and any future owners of the property, will be able to continue harvesting forest and agricultural crops in perpetuity on the remainder of the tract.

### ***About the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority – Land Conservation Program***

*The Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) provides financial assistance and administers programs that encourage stewardship of the environment and promote economic development statewide. GEFA manages the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP), which works to preserve a statewide network of land and water resources for current and future generations to use and enjoy. The GLCP provides land conservation funding, including grants, low-interest loans and tax incentives, to achieve the permanent conservation of land through the acquisition of conservation easements and fee-title ownership. For more information on the GLCP, please visit [www.glcp.ga.gov](http://www.glcp.ga.gov) or [www.gefa.org](http://www.gefa.org).*

***About Georgia Department of Natural Resources***

*The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices. The Real Estate Office and Wildlife Resources Division of DNR provides technical guidance and administrative support to help private landowners donate high-value conservation lands and easements to the State of Georgia. For more information on the DNR, please visit: [www.gadnr.org](http://www.gadnr.org).*

***About Georgia Forestry Commission***

*The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) provides leadership, service, and education to protect and conserve Georgia's forest resources. The GFC's Forest Legacy Program protects environmentally important working forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. The program allows for the donation and/or purchase of conservation easements and fee simple land from willing participants who wish to keep the land in forestry use. For more information on the GFC, please call 1-800-Ga-Trees or visit [www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org).*

***About Conserve Georgia***

*The Conserve Georgia program was developed to foster a culture of conservation throughout the state of Georgia. Nearly a dozen state agencies and authorities are working together with businesses, civic leaders, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and residents to make Georgia's land, water and energy resources more sustainable now and for generations to come. The program's Web site – [www.conservegeorgia.org](http://www.conservegeorgia.org) – serves as a portal to help Georgians find information on a wide range of conservation resources and programs.*

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